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DE RUEHAH #0953/01 2550603  
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R 120603Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7783  
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2566  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 4975  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1677  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1278  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1195  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0393  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000953

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [KFLU](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: Turkmenistan Imports Eggs Before Chickens

Ref: Ashgabat 620

Summary

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11. (SBU) The largest private poultry producer in Turkmenistan, Altyn Hilal, resumed direct market sales of chicken at local markets on September 5, after an involuntary five-month hiatus. The government's covert January 22 ban on imported poultry products had forced Altyn Hilal company owner Ahmet Charyev to close his poultry farm because he was prohibited from importing chicken eggs from Iran (reftel). The government's quiet decision allowing Charyev to resume egg importation is a desperate attempt to relieve demand pressure in the local market where, reportedly, the last reserves of imported U.S. chicken quarters are dwindling, no full roasters have been available for months, and prices have been rising. End Summary.

Domestic Poultry Meat Back in the Market  
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12. (SBU) During a September 5 meeting with Poloff, Altyn Hilal's Charyev confirmed that unlabelled roasters seen in the local bazaars by embassy staff were from Hilal. Government authorities decided to allow Altyn Hilal to import eggs from Iran in July (reftel), but still kept the ban on imported chicken. Charyev said that prior to getting the requisite State Veterinary Service (SVS) certification to allow open sales of his product he had sold to restaurants and cafes in unlabeled packages, because these businesses were not likely to be checked for proper certification. He complained that many of the "restaurant" proprietors had chosen to resell his unlabelled product to retailers. Foreign Economic Relations Department Chief at the Ministry of Trade Annamuhmet Weliyev told Pol Asst on August 30 that Altyn Hilal was supplying 20 tons of poultry meat to the market every day, which he claimed was "enough to meet the demand." Weliyev did not volunteer that this business was being conducted without SVS certification.

13. (SBU) Charyev confirmed rumors that retail chicken was becoming scarce and told Poloff that "the certification process for this

batch of chicken was quick because the authorities are interested in increasing poultry supply to maintain low prices." Charyev reported that Altyn Hilal sells 15 tons of poultry meat per day for 47,000 manats (approximately \$2.00 using the unofficial exchange rate of 23,800 to the dollar) per kilo, but acknowledged that his current supply would be exhausted in several days. His product is retailing at the bazaars for 65,000 manats/kilo and at the private Turkish supermarket Yimpas for 56,000 manats/kilo. (Note: The government regulates the price of meat. Chicken quarters previously sold for 37,000 manats/kilo; whole chickens sold for 45,000 manats/kilo. End Note.)

#### Imported Bush Legs Banned

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14. (SBU) The Ministry of Trade's Weliyev reported that imported poultry products are still banned for fear of bird flu from abroad. He confirmed that imported poultry meat has been banned for months, and explained that "there are some Bush legs (chicken quarters) still available at the market, but they are expensive, close to their expiration dates and have been refrozen several times, which impairs their taste." (Note: Imported roasters from France and Brazil have not been in the markets for months. End Note.)

#### Comment

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15. (SBU) The government continues to react to fears of the outside world by banning all foreign imported poultry meat. No empirical data on Avian Influenza are needed for irrational decision-making. Officials must have realized the risk of exposing the government's fears of imported poultry meat if retail chicken supplies were

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completely exhausted. The loss of available chicken and the higher prices will not inspire local protests from Turkmenistan citizens, although the expatriate community could suffer from the loss. However, disclosure of the government's inability to manage the local meat supply could prove problematic for several ministries with responsibility for maintaining President Niyazov's implicit social contract to keep sufficient foodstuffs available at low prices to mollify the population. End Comment.

BRUSH